

The Role of the Archon

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A Philosophus is qualified to serve in the capacity of Archon for a period of six months. In a fully operative Lodge, this is the fifth officer role (“floor position”) where each member serves, i.e., Archon needs to have at least the grade of 4 = 7 of Philosophus.

DUTIES OF THE ARCHON

Presiding over the twilight and darkness which encompass us in the absence of the sun of life and light, the Archon guards the Gate of the West. He/She also assists in the reception of the Candidate; and superintends the subordinate officers in the execution of their duties.

Before each convocation, the Archon needs to do the following preparation work: Draw an invoking Earth Pentagram over the top of his/her sword, in shimmering blue light, using the index finger. Hold the sword between the palms and feel a current of pure Light flowing into it through the palms. Image the sword glowing with living, loving blue etheric Light.

THE ARCHANGEL

In Hebrew and Christian symbolism Archon is the great archangel Sandalphon. She is the Preparer of the Path.

The basic image of Sandalphon is that of a noble angelic figure; full of grace; winged with dark curly brown hair, and garbed in Earth colors: citrine, russet, deep indigo, and olive green. The highlights of the robe (its shadows and contours) are white, such that an optical “flashing” effect can be seen. Sandalphon holds a sword in the right hand. A final useful touch is to see yourself, as Sandalphon, in the midst of a radiant dark indigo sphere the same height as your physical body. Once this sphere of light is established in the imagination, usually it is the easiest of images to recall at odd moments during the ritual.

THE SWORD

The Archon’s ensign of office is the sword which symbolizes severity and judgment. The sword represents the forces of the pillar of Severity as a whole, but the places of the Sephiroth are not necessarily indicated thereon. The guard is Hod and is usually made of brass; the grip is the path of Shin and may be of scarlet, and the pommel, Malkuth, may be black. The grip by which it is wielded, being the path Shin, represents the Universe governed by the flaming force of Severity, and represents the Archon as wielding the Forces of Divine Severity. The blade shows this concept from Hod to Binah, encompassing Geburah through the paths of Mem and Cheth.

THE LAMEN

The lamén of the Archon is “a Triangle with three Tau Crosses in the center.” The white triangle refers to the three paths connecting Malkuth with the other Sephiroth. The Tau Cross is the hilt of the uplifted sword, which is the ensign of the Archon. As a symbol of salvation, the Tau Cross also represents salvation from death, and eternal life. The Hebrew value of Tau is 400, and the total value of the three Tau Crosses is 1200. Thus the three Tau Crosses relate to “Hua,” which has Hebrew value 12, and “Hua” is the avenging angel. It is therefore a fitting symbol on the lamén of the Archon for the Archon also represents the Avenger of the Gods.

The black field represents the darkness and ignorance of the grave of error. The white triangle established in the surrounding darkness is circumscribed in its turn by the Circle of Light. In addition to this explanation, the lamén represents “The Light that shineth in darkness though the darkness comprehendeth it not.” It affirms the possibility of the Redemption from evil and even that of evil itself, through self-sacrifices. It is a symbol of tremendous strength and fortitude.

THE CAPE

The black mantle symbolizes darkness which is threatening and terrible to the Outer, as concealing an avenging force ever ready to break forth against the Evil Ones.

THE BANNER OF THE WEST

The Banner of the West completes the symbols of the Archon. It is thus explained in the Zelator Grade: “The White Triangle refers to the three Paths connecting Malkuth with the other Sephiroth; while the Red Cross is the Hidden Knowledge of the Divine Nature which is to be obtained through their aid. The Cross and the Triangle together represent Life and Light.” It also represents eternally the possibility of Rescuing the Evil; but in it the Tiphareth Cross is placed within the White Triangle of the Supernals as thereby representing that Sacrifice is made only unto the Higher. The red Cross is bordered with gold in this instance, to represent the Perfect Metal obtained in and through the Darkness of Putrefaction. Black is its field which thus represents the Darkness and Ignorance of the Outer, while the White Triangle is again the Light which shineth in the Darkness but which is not comprehended thereby. Therefore is the Banner of the West the symbol of Twilight as it is, the equation of Light and Darkness. The pole and the base are black, to represent that even in the Depths of Evil can that symbol stand. The cord is black, but the transverse bar and the lance-point may be golden or brass and the tassels scarlet as in the case of the Banner of the East to symbolize the Divine Self-renunciation, whose trials and sufferings form, as it is, the Ornament of the Completed Work.

OPENING & CLOSING OF THE NEOPHYTE RITUAL

Office and Station of the Archon

The station of the Archon is on the throne of the West which symbolizes increase of darkness and decrease of light. The Archon's office is fortitude. The office and station of the Archon correspond to the Sephirah Malkuth on the Tree of Life.

The position of the Throne of the West is at the lowest point of Malkuth. It is fitting for the Avenger of the Gods, because he/she is placed there in eternal affirmation against the Evil One. The Throne is also placed there as a seat of witness and of punishment decreed against Evil. Basically, the Throne has two functions: to prevent the Qliploth from entering and to prevent anyone lingering outside this area from entering through curiosity.

The three chief ritual officers (Eminent Adept, Archon, and Architect) correspond to the three stages of the alchemical operation. The Black Work is the Preparation and Putrefaction stage of the alchemical operation. It begins with things as they appear. It is directed toward breaking down and thus dissolving forms. Therefore, it is represented by the Archon and his/her black mantle. The Archon's sword, as a symbol of destruction, indicates the first steps in the study and practice of occultism.

The purpose of practical occultism is to enable man to go beyond the ordinary limits of human personality, to become more than mere genus Homo. One cannot do this without leaving the old man behind. Mystic death must precede occult resurrection. There is no possibility of becoming a practical occultist without effecting radical changes in personality. This is a stumbling-block to many. Those who study occultism and enter occult societies are often impelled by the desire to change conditions. They wish to exercise powers. They want to learn formulas for performing wonders. Yet they balk at transforming themselves. Thus the address of the Archon should be studied and pondered by every Neophyte, and it might not hurt some members of higher grades to recur to it every so often. The keynote of this address is the Archon's recommendation that the Neophyte adopt a mental condition worthy of this Order. His/Her last words concerning perseverance complete the suggestion that the primary purpose of occult work is to transform the personality of the operator.

Oration

During the Oration the Archon holds the sword in the right hand, extending it at a 45° angle. At the line, "So may it be," E.A. lowers his/her scepter, Archon simultaneously dips his/her sword.

Secret Name

The second letter O or Ayin is spoken by the Archon, who symbolizes the darkness and mystery of that which is yet to come -- that which lies beyond the range of our present knowledge. In Tarot the letter O is related to key 15, the Devil. Thus it represents all those occult forces which appear to be adverse and threatening to those who are in ignorance of the law.

Limitless power from the inexhaustible Source of Light is suggested by the letter A. The apparent limitations of the Manifest are indicated by the letter O. The

perfect freedom of those who know the Law and obey it is the meaning of the letter M. Power, Limitation and Liberation, as the ritual has it.

Antiphony

The antiphony comes after the declaration of the secret name. It begins with the words Alpha and Omega, which are the Greek names of the letters we call A and O. They are spoken by the same officers who speak these letters in the declaration of the secret name -- and for the same reason. Furthermore, the mystery teaching has come down to us from the Orient, through Egypt, and has been formulated in the Greek tongue also. These letters, Alpha and Omega, which occur in the Christian Revelation of St. John, are found elsewhere in old mystery texts, including fragments of rituals which go back to the Eleusinian Mysteries.

Mystic Circumambulation

The Archon, whose office properly corresponds to the 4 = 7 grade of the First Order, come after the Second Order members during Mystic Circumambulation; so that the Archon typifies the highest level of knowledge and skill to be gained in the First Order.

During the Mystic Circumambulation the Archon carries the sword in the right hand at heart level. As he/she passes the East during the Mystic Circumambulation, he/she should dip the sword, with the visualization that it is receiving a portion of that current of light streaming out through the tip of the E.A.'s scepter, in recognition of the idea that the powers represented by the insignia owe whatever efficacy they have to the secret virtue of the East specialized in those powers. The Archon needs to make sure to dip the sword before passing the East, and keep it lowered until past the East.

The Archon passes the E.A. once, continues with the procession until arriving at his/her throne, then leaves the procession and remains standing facing East, holding the sword extended upward at an angle of 45°. The tip of the sword needs to be pointed to the tip of the E.A.'s scepter, and the Archon should image that the sword receives light streaming from the tip of the scepter.

The Archon, the Avenger of the Gods, inherits the Light; therefore he/she only passes the Eminent Adept once.

Adoration

The sword is held by the Archon as in the Oration, and dipped at the end of each line. At the "Amen," the Sign of Silence is given by the left hand.

It is a useful visualization to see the image of the Sun reflected in the sword each time it is dipped, as though, by this image, the sword is receiving an impression of the true nature of this Lord, who is the "interior Sun" of each of us.

Declaration and Mystic Words

After the Eminent Adept commands the Herald to declare that he/she has opened the Lodge comes the single knock by the E.A. which is repeated by the Archon and the Architect. This affirms the establishment of the White Triangle and therefore the completion of the Opening Ceremony. Afterward the mystic words which accompany the knocks seal the image of the Light.

Reverse Circumambulation

The intention of the Reverse Circumambulation is to withdraw the Light. After passing the E.A. once, the Archon continues with the procession until arriving at his/her throne, then leaves the procession and remains standing facing East, holding the sword extended upward at an angle of 45°. The tip of the sword needs to be pointed to the tip of the E.A.'s scepter, and the Archon should image that the sword returns the light it received to the E.A.'s scepter.

THE RITE OF INITIATION

Notice that this entire ritual is concerned with a path that leads from outer darkness to inner light. The reception, first purification and consecration take place symbolically in the darkest part of Malkuth. The moment this is finished, the candidate's aura is purified and consecrated, then he/she is conducted to the foot of the Altar, that is, under the citrine part of Malkuth which receives the impact of the Middle Pillar.

Obligation

A very important part of the Obligation is the use of the sword by the Archon. The penalty clause of the obligation merits the Neophyte's closest attention and profoundest meditation. It is a penalty which every violator of the obligation inflicts upon himself or herself. No outside power inflicts punishment. When we forget our pledge, we punish ourselves. Only in the most extreme cases does it operate with the full force described in the closing words of our pledge; but whenever we put ourselves in opposition to the current of force with which we are placed in special contact by Initiation, we feel some measure of the destructive and disintegrating effect which is always a consequence of our misuse of that relation.

First Circumambulation

As the procession passes the Archon, he/she knocks once. This marks the establishment of a special link between the candidate and the external cosmic order which is symbolized by the Archon. The candidate is at this point brought into a new relation with all the forces and laws of nature, and if one makes right use of the opportunities opened to him/her by that contact, one will go far.

Second Circumambulation

The Herald bars the candidate's approach to the West to mark that the nature man cannot obtain the understanding of, even the Darkness, unless by purification and consecration of the physical vehicle of the candidate.

As the procession approaches the West, the candidate catches a glimpse of the Guardian of the West, and learns that the Guardian's name is "Darkness." In this name lie hidden many practical secrets which will be unfolded in the course of later work. Then the candidate receives his/her first practical instruction, a warning against fear and its consequences. Note well that this warning comes from an officer who personifies what is the greatest cause of fear -- namely, darkness. It is as if the Adversary gave the candidate instruction as to the way in which that Adversary is to be overcome. Here is a deep lesson. It is the truth that attentive consideration of whatever seems to be against us always reveals, in the adverse condition itself, the means whereby it may be overcome.

When the procession passes the Archon, after his/her words of instruction, he/she knocks to intimate the establishment of a second link between the candidate and the forces which the candidate is to learn to master.

Invocation

The Purifier and the Consecrator stand behind the candidate, left and right, respectively; the two and the Herald, standing at the northeast corner of the altar, represent a supporting Triad. The candidate kneels, and the Eminent Adept advances to a point just East of the altar, where he/she is joined by the Architect and the Archon. The Architect stands on the South side of the altar, facing it, and the Archon faces the altar on the North side. Thus the Eminent Adept, the Archon, and the Architect form the Supernal Triad. They join their insignia as a symbol of the concentration over the altar of certain forces.

As the Lord of the Universe is invoked by the Eminent Adept, all members and officers in the Temple rise to show that through the invocation of this Supreme Power all the inner forces are called into activity. The invocation itself brings down on the candidate a special manifestation of power that links him/her indissolubly to the Inner School or Third Order.

The hoodwink is now loosened, and at the words of the Eminent Adept, is removed. At the same moment all present clap hands sharply as a symbol of a change which has actually been effected. Henceforth, the candidate is no longer addressed as "Child of Earth." He/She has been symbolically and actually born anew, can never stand again in quite the same relationship to the outer work, and is also admitted to a wholly new relationship with the inner forces of which all that our Temple contained are outer symbols.

After the hoodwink is removed, the Eminent Adept, the Archon, and the Architect join scepters and sword above the new Neophyte's head, thus formulating the Supernal Triad again, and assert the reception of the new Neophyte into the Order.

Antiphony

The three Chief Officers indicate first of all the path of the WORD, then the path of the LIGHT, and finally the path of MAN. The WORD comes first because of

the occult truth that the universe is mental, and all phenomena have their origin in the ideas of the Cosmic Mind. The vibration of the WORD brings forth the manifestation of the LIGHT, and MAN is the synthesis of both WORD and LIGHT.

Mystic Words

The three Chief Officers then pronounce the mystic words to seal the current of the Flowing Light. Each word is followed by a knock, and each knock corresponds to one of the nine Sephiroth following Kether in the tenfold manifestation of the Life-Power. This is the point where the magnetic influences of the three officers work together, and they direct their influence to the aura of the Neophyte.

Signs, Grip and Password

Only after having been brought to the Light is the Neophyte led to the East of the Altar, which affirms that with this Light he/she will be able to cast out and trample on his own Evil Persona which, when it has been put in its place, will then become a support to him/her. It is to the Archon, "The Avenger of the Gods" therefore, that the duty of entrusting the Neophyte with the secret signs, etc., is delegated. It is the Archon who places the Neophyte for the first time between the Pillars and superintends his/her final purification and consecration thus bringing the peculiar force in matter of the Archon to the aid of the Neophyte, so that he/she may more safely and resolutely combat the temptations of the Evil Persona.

Between the Pillars

The place to which the Neophyte is now drawn forward by the Archon is actually the place where the Architect normally has his/her seat. The Archon, remember, represents the Qabalistic Malkuth, or Kingdom, and when the Neophyte participates in the "Secrets of the Kingdom" which are symbolized by the knowledge just imparted to him/her by the Archon, the Neophyte becomes as a king, and is therefore advanced to the place in the Temple occupied by the Qabalistic "King," who is also the "Christos."

Archon's Address

The address of the Archon is intended to fix firmly in the mind of the new Neophyte the fundamental principles which will govern all his/her subsequent work. The Archon gives this address, because the Archon is the representative of the "Kingdom," that is, of the system of orderly law by means of which a practical occultist is enabled to exert control over the conditions of his/her environment. The words of this address of the Archon are few. The ideas, however, include all that is required for complete success in our work.